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THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL JOURNAL

CONTINUING "THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER"

SEPTEMBER 1915

EDUCATIONAL NEWS AND EDITORIAL COMMENT

The "Gary plan" occupies the center of the stage. It is described as a means of cutting in two the expense of schooling and as a device for making possible greatly needed readjustments in the course of study. Superintendent Wirt's work in New York City has focused attention on him as a possible successor to Superintendent Maxwell. It is reported that a number of schools in New York will be remodeled so as to come under the Gary plan. Mrs. Young in her annual report advocates the adoption of the plan as a means of reducing the deficit and otherwise clearing up the dangers that beset the Chicago system. School men all over the country are affected by the discussion. If a superintendent proposes a new building, he is now met by the inquiry from his Board, Why not adopt the Gary system and put twice as many children into a building as before and save money? Thus, for example, in Cleveland the Survey Committee is asked why it does not adopt the Gary plan and save a million dollars.

It is a grave criticism of our times that we do not have the data on which to pass judgment on all these issues. In a period when scientific studies of educational problems are everywhere being advocated, here is a most influential administrative plan and no adequate facts are at hand regarding its success. A number of

reports have been sketched and time has been asked for the plan to come into full maturity. There is some reserve on the part of many observers because it is feared that he who expresses a question will be convicted of jealousy.

Superintendent Wirt is unqualifiedly deserving of unstinted praise for projecting the plan. To have had the originality of mind and the enthusiasm of execution which set the plan in motion is clearly to have risen to a place of importance in the history of American schools.

The time has come, however, when information is wanted. To cover up vital issues at this time is to undermine other legitimate, though less spectacular, movements. It is distinctly to be understood that the Gary system is not a cheap system. It is a little difficult to determine how expensive it is, but it is not below the median of the country and is probably notably above.

Secondly, instruction under the highly departmentalized plan in operation in Gary cannot succeed without very superior and very expensive and very watchful supervision. The instructorial issues raised by the Gary plan should never sink into the background.

It is to be hoped that all the virtues of the Gary plan will be imitated widely. In the meantime there is most urgent need of a clear, frank, full, and authoritative statement regarding costs and regarding instructorial problems.

The General Education Board has taken steps to turn its great resources in the direction of scientific studies of educational problems. This Board has for years been giving to institutions in all parts of the country. It has done much in the South to spread practical education. That the Board should now take up the task of aiding in a careful scientific study of school problems is gratifying from two points of view.

First, a number of problems bid fair to be brought much nearer to solution than they are at the present time. Thus the problem of standards of cost for schools is a complex problem of vital importance on which we have at the present time too scanty information. Again, the problems of methods are many and unsolved. While private enterprise multiplies textbooks and devices

for directing school work, the bewildered teacher and superintendent wonder how the individual is to guide his choice of suitable instruments for class work. Such problems can be solved only when some workers are set apart from the engrossing routine of the school to find out, by scientific methods, facts which all can use. It requires patience and resources as well as scientific insight to carry on these investigations.

The second point of view from which the action of the General Education Board is of great significance is that of the student of educational science. As a special branch of research, education is very young. It is vigorous and enthusiastic, as is every young movement. The satisfaction and impulse to larger endeavor which come from recognition can hardly be overlooked in estimating the influence of the step now taken by the General Education Board. Not an investigator in the laboratories of educational psychology, not a student of school statistics and methods, but will work with new zest tomorrow because he will feel that his endeavors are being reinforced and his co-workers being increased in number and strength through this new co-operation.

The Home and School League of Philadelphia has for five years been experimenting with the problem of supplying a cheap luncheon for the children in the schools of that city. The School Luncheons in Philadelphia League has demonstrated in the course of the experiment that it is a distinct advantage to the schools to provide luncheon. It has demonstrated further that by careful organization the "receipts from the children cover the entire cost of food materials." There is enough profit to promise well for the full maintenance of the whole enterprise. Luncheons can be prepared at an expense of about three-quarters of a cent per luncheon, thus leaving one-quarter of a cent to pay for supervision and serving. The contrast between food served through school luncheons and food bought on the street is emphasized in terms of the quality of the food, cheapness of the portion served, and the educative influence of the system.

A pamphlet has been issued giving in detail the results of the experiment. The report contains full recipes for the preparation of portions, and examples of the blanks used in accounting.

The experiment has been tried out by the League in nine elementary schools. It is recommended to the Board of Education in the light of the experience which has thus been accumulated that the work of the organization be taken over and enlarged under direct supervision of the Board.

The legislature of the state of Utah created at its last session a commission to draft a new educational code for the state. It directed this commission to inquire of educational experts and of citizens what educational policies they would favor for the state. The questionnaire which has been sent out is too long to quote in full, but it is interesting to note what matters are engaging the attention of the commission. The following selected questions, each carrying its number, will give some idea of the scope of the inquiry:

6. Should the State Superintendent of Public Instruction continue to be elected by the citizens, or should a constitutional amendment be secured to provide for his appointment? By whom should he be appointed?

7. Should the State Department of Education be clothed with power to enforce a state educational policy, or should it remain a department largely advisory in character?

10. How may the schools receive adequate funds for their support without becoming unduly burdensome to the people? Name possible sources of revenue not now available.

11. Give your views as to how the greatest efficiency may be secured with the least possible expenditure of funds.

12. Do you believe that the schools may contribute directly to their own support? If so, how?

13. Do you think it feasible and advisable for children to contribute their own or family support during the school term? If so, how?

15. To children of what ages should compulsory education apply?

16. What length of time during the year should such children be required to attend school?

17. How long should elementary schools be in session during the year to be eligible to receive state school funds?

21. For what terms of service should superintendents and teachers be employed? What provisions of law may be made to govern terms of service?

24. Would you favor a constitutional amendment which would permit school buildings to be used for any social, religious, or educational purpose when not in use by the school itself?

26. What provisions should be made in the law for adequate care of the health of school children?

31. Would you advocate establishing schools of agriculture throughout the state wherever conditions are favorable, or would you have agriculture taught in the schools as they are already established?

The rapid growth of the Junior high-school idea has been a matter of universal comment during the last year. No month has passed without the report of several such reorganizations of school systems actually accomplished, in progress, or contemplated. The June issue of the *Pedagogical Seminary* publishes a study of the present status of this new institution. As a result of a very complete response to questionnaires and correspondence, "direct information has been received that this movement exists in twenty-three states, and five more are reported either as having junior schools or as preparing to organize them. Returns have been received from sixty-eight cities that have the junior or intermediate schools in actual operation. Minnesota with six systems, Indiana with six, California with eight, Wisconsin and Kansas with nine each seem to be the states having the largest number of the schools."

Available enrolment figures already indicate a marked increase over that of the same grades under the old system. "Ten school systems," for example, "show that the number of boys in the junior high schools is 42 per cent greater than it was under the old plan and that the number of girls has increased 27 per cent. The total increase in enrolment is 34 per cent."

In connection with the junior high-school movement, it is interesting to note that the schools of Jackson, Michigan, are to operate this year in accordance with the plan set forth below:

The School System of Jackson, Michigan We are preparing to reorganize on a six, three, and three basis. It has seemed desirable to separate the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades from both the grades above and the grades below—for purposes of discipline, of social and ethical instruction, of the creation of such a school spirit among children of about the same mental and physical age as would become a strong factor in keeping them in school; also because the early adolescent age seems to offer a distinct problem. It is, of course, needless to mention these or the other many arguments that are

offered in favor of this plan; but some of the principles which we have endeavored to observe in formulating it ought perhaps to be briefly stated.

It is proposed to organize on the basis of kindergarten, elementary, intermediate, and high schools. We should like to make the intermediate schools so interesting and attractive as to hold in school many of the 50 or 60 per cent that are now being lost between the ages of thirteen and seventeen, at the same time making the subject-matter of instruction for this class such as would profit them most.

Believing that the present promotion methods have had a good deal to do with the appalling mortality in the upper grammar grades, we propose to promote by subject in the intermediate school as in the high school. The old uniform arrangements are to be broken up in other ways: differences among children in mental ability are to be recognized by providing a minimum amount of work for each grade for all children and an increasingly larger amount for those mentally and physically able to do it; differences in taste, aptitudes, and, to a certain extent, in probable future occupations are to be recognized by providing a considerable amount of elective work, increasing in amount as the child moves up through the grades, until in about the next to the last year in the high school the "required" studies disappear altogether.

Among the "elective" studies in the seventh and eighth grades are to be placed some of the studies usually "required" in these grades, and beginning with the seventh grade foreign languages are to be offered; also work in commercial, industrial, and agricultural lines and in the household arts. These latter subjects are to be taught rather from the pre-vocational than from the vocational standpoint, and yet they are to be made so practical as to be quite helpful to the boy or girl who finds it necessary to seek employment at the end of the intermediate school period. The intermediate schools are to be trying-out places, furnishing opportunity for the boy to find himself, to discover his tastes, powers, and aptitudes, in so far as dominant characteristics are discoverable at that age. Accordingly he is to be allowed great freedom to browse about among the elective subjects, changing from one line of work to another; in fact, he is to be encouraged to do so unless his bent is very apparent.

Every line of work in the intermediate school is to be continued in the high school in a more highly specialized form, and the "vocational" subjects are there to be taught *as such* for those young people for whom it is thought these subjects are desirable and suitable.

The work of the intermediate school and the high school is to be organized in two cycles, each forming a unit in itself and yet so related that the children will hear very distinctly the call of the high school and be drawn on into the tenth and higher grades. There will be no graduation from the intermediate school, but merely promotion to the high school between the ninth and tenth grades on a promotion certificate of the same sort as is used between the fifth grade and the sixth or any other two grades. Other devices with the same

end in view will be employed; for instance, the interchange of credits between the intermediate school and the high school.

Henceforth the departments of the United States government will co-operate for the purpose of seeing that all immigrant children shall have an opportunity to become educated in American schools as soon as they arrive. The Bureau of Immigration is to report all children of immigrants between the ages of five and sixteen years to the Bureau of Education, which will in turn notify the school superintendent into whose jurisdiction the family moves. The school authorities in this way will be kept informed as to the existence of these children, so that immediate steps may be taken to place the children in school. The success of this plan will depend upon the school authorities, but a means like this of beginning the process of Americanization will appeal to school men as highly practicable.

The United States Bureau of Education has collected data from forty-three textbook publishers in the United States, purposing to show how much of a burden the purchase of textbooks is upon the public. The total sales for 1913 amounted to \$17,274,030, and excluding California, which prints its own textbooks, the enrolment in the schools of the country is approximately 18,000,000. For each child enrolled in the United States; therefore, the total sales of textbooks is 78.3 cents. The total expenditure for all purposes is approximately \$38.31. This makes the cost of textbooks about 2 per cent of the whole cost of maintenance.

In regard to the textbook situation in California, the first report of the state authorities which has been made on that subject states that approximately \$90,000 has been saved the state by the printing of its own textbooks for the 35,000 eighth-grade children alone. Before the state took over this project the cost per pupil in the eighth grade was \$5.08, while now it is only \$2.35.

By virtue of an act recently passed by the Pennsylvania legislature every teacher in the state becomes an assistant health officer. Teachers are required to report to the local health officer unusual symptoms of any kind, such as rash, sore throat, eye trouble, etc., noticed in any child attending school.

**Caring for
Immigrants**

Textbooks

**Teachers as
Health Officers**

The following statement is made in an official announcement from Memphis in regard to elementary commercial instruction in the grammar grades:

**Commercial
Subjects in
Elementary
Schools**

In the Memphis vocation school students who have finished the regular sixth-grade work are permitted to elect both stenography and bookkeeping and their success in these subjects equals their success in the regular or academic subjects. Many of our eighth-grade graduates are in the commercial service of the city and they are rendering efficient service both as stenographers and as bookkeepers. Of course, there are some positions which require more thorough training in English, etc., than these students secure in the grades; but the same may be said of the students who complete the high-school courses, and of some who have graduated from reputable colleges. The following facts may be of interest: Our eighth-grade graduates who enter commercial service usually receive a higher entrance salary than the high-school graduates who enter the school service; and the commercial service offers more rapid promotion than the school service. In other words, commercial education pays even if given only in the upper grammar grades.

This statement suggests three very important questions: (1) Should commercial courses be introduced into our elementary grades? (2) If they are added to the grammar-school course, how general should they be? (3) What general courses could be added to the best advantage?

Mr. Ryan has prepared the introductory chapter for the Report of the Commissioner of Education for 1914 in the form of a general survey of education for 1914. The following quotations will be of interest to teachers and officers of elementary schools:

**General
Educational
Conditions
in 1914**

GENERAL GROWTH

In round numbers there were 22,000,000 persons enrolled in educational institutions in the United States in 1914. Of these over 19,000,000 were in elementary schools; 1,374,000 in secondary schools, both public and private; and 216,000 in colleges and universities. Close to another hundred thousand were in normal schools preparing to be teachers, 67,000 were in professional schools, and the remainder were scattered through other types of institutions. The teachers for this educational army numbered 700,000, of whom 566,000 were in public schools. In point of rapid growth the public high school still presents the most impressive figures; the enrolment for 1914 is greater by over 84,000 than for the year before.

THE COST OF EDUCATION

The cost of education for the year, as nearly as can be estimated, was \$750,000,000. This three-quarters of a billion is a relatively small amount when compared with other items in the public expense. It is less by \$300,000,000 than the cost of running the federal government; it is less than one-third the nation's expenditure for alcoholic liquors; it is only a little over three times the estimated cost of admissions to moving-picture theaters in the United States for the same year. Measured in terms of products of the soil, the United States spent somewhat more for education in 1914 than the value of its cotton crop, somewhat less than the value of its wheat crop, and less than half the value of the annual harvest of corn; while the nation's bill for education was less by nearly a hundred millions than the value of the exports from the harbor of New York in the calendar year just passed.

ENROLMENT, SCHOOL POPULATION, AND LENGTH OF TERM

It is estimated that there were 25,587,331 children of school age (5 to 18) in 1913, as compared with 25,167,445 in 1912. The enrolment of elementary and secondary pupils increased from 19,922,261 in 1912 to 20,431,609 in 1913. General and school population both remain predominantly rural. By the census estimates for 1913, 46.3 per cent of the population was urban and 53.7 per cent rural, if the census definition of a city as anything over 2,500 population be accepted. In population 6 to 20 years of age the cities have 41.6 per cent of the total, as compared with 58.4 per cent for the rural districts.

Very little increase is yet to be noted in the average term for public schools. Between 1910 and 1913 the increase was from 157.5 days a year to 158.1—a growth of only six-tenths of a day in three years. Attendance has improved, however. The average number of days attended by each person enrolled increased from 113 in 1910 to 115.6 in 1913.

CITY SCHOOLS

School administration, particularly in cities, is becoming more and more a science and the office of superintendent of schools a profession. This is becoming true even in the smaller cities and towns; 614 out of 756 superintendents in cities below 25,000 population say that their school boards are disposed to give them more power. There is still uncertainty of tenure about the office, however. Between 1911 and 1913 there were 348 changes of superintendents in cities between 4,000 and 25,000 population. That the smaller-city problem merits the special attention it is receiving may be seen from the fact that in 1913 there were only 229 cities of more than 25,000 population, while there were 2,173 cities between 2,500 and 25,000 containing one-third of the total urban school population. In the larger cities the three most prominent topics in superintendents' reports of the year relate to "definiteness in supervision, changes in grade organization, and vocational training." Mentioned frequently in city-school reports is wider use of the school plant. The

survey movement shows little abatement; of the nine formal school surveys reported for the year, six dealt with city-school systems.

THE RURAL SCHOOL

The main lines of rural-school progress during the year have centered about the problem of a larger unit of administration and supervision, the movement for consolidation or centralization of schools, and efforts for equalization of educational opportunity by state aid. The county system of administration was adopted for Ohio in 1914. With Wisconsin, which changed from the district system in 1913, there are now 18 states having a more or less definitely organized county system of schools. In addition, several other states have the county unit of taxation.¹

Special activity in consolidation of schools is reported from Alabama, Indiana, Louisiana, Minnesota, North Dakota, and Ohio. Consolidation has not yet operated to reduce the total number of schoolhouses in the United States, however, which increased from 265,474 in 1910 to 277,148 in 1913.

Investigations of the year have emphasized the fact that the rural-school problem is not confined to any one section, though the southern states, with an overwhelmingly rural population, at present show the most active efforts for improvement. New York state reports that of the 11,642 elementary schools in the state 8,430 are one-room schools; that in 3,580 of these the average attendance was 10 or less; and in nearly half the maximum tax yield at 1 per cent for school purposes would be \$400. Of Colorado's 1,725 "third-class" school districts 281 contain fewer than 15 children of school age.

CHILDREN OF PRE-SCHOOL AGE

Unmistakable signs of new interest in the special problem of the education of very young children are at hand. A partial indication is to be found in the vigorous growth of kindergartens since 1912, the last year for which figures were gathered.

Between 1912 and 1914 the number of cities or villages having public kindergartens increased from 867 to 1,135. There were 7,365 kindergartens in 1912, with 364,189 children, and 8,856 teachers. The 1914 figures show 8,825 separate kindergartens, 465,868 children enrolled, and 10,569 kindergarten teachers. It is still true, however, that less than half the cities in the United States have kindergartens, and the rural school is as yet little touched by kindergarten influence. From the pedagogical side the dominant note of the year is the movement for the integration of kindergarten work with that of the grades and the reorganization of kindergarten training schools to facilitate this integration.

¹ More recently (1915) Utah has made her optional county administration system mandatory, and Texas has greatly extended the powers and duties of the county boards of education in all counties.

The Montessori movement has not yet made any appreciable advance in a number of schools, but has already exercised a considerable influence in two directions—in stimulating kindergarten teachers to a profitable re-examination of Froebelian theory and practice, and in calling attention generally to the significant and special problem involved in the education of children of pre-school age.

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

In the cities where investigations preparatory to the introduction of vocational training have been made attention has quite generally been paid to the problem of vocational guidance, and vocation bureaus have usually accompanied or followed the establishment of vocational courses. Philadelphia's new official is director of vocational education and guidance. Significant of the progress of the movement is the taking over by the public schools in whole or in part of the function of vocational counseling. The present emphasis appears to be upon the fact that vocational guidance in public education is not a simple problem of analysis and placement, but involves consideration throughout the child's school life of the problem of future employment. According to a preliminary investigation recently made by the Bureau of Education, about a hundred public high schools, representing some 40 cities, had definitely organized, conscious plans of vocational guidance in 1914, through vocation bureaus, consultation committees, vocation analysts, trial vocational courses, systematic visits to industrial plants, or regular courses in vocations. The National Vocational Guidance Association, growing out of the national conferences on vocational guidance which had been held since 1910, was formally organized during the year.